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SUBJECT: NDI MAKING PROGRESS WITH LOW-PROFILE APPROACH

REF: A. CAIRO 1373
[1](#)B. CAIRO 399
[1](#)C. CAIRO 323
[1](#)D. 07 CAIRO 3001

Classified By: ECPO Mincouns William R. Stewart per 1.4 (b).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: National Democratic Institute (NDI) resident representative Lila Jaafar told us September 16 that in spite of NDI's lack of official registration, the organization provided training and publications to local NGOs over the past year by adopting a low-profile posture and informing State Security Investigative Services (SSIS) of NDI activities in advance. Jaafar said local NGOs have been approaching NDI for training, and that NDI is working with these NGOs throughout Egypt on projects such as monitoring local councils and increasing women's voter registration. Jaafar told us that in a September 9 meeting, the MFA requested that NDI wait until it is registered before undertaking work, but also promised not to dictate NDI's activities. Jaafar told us NDI plans to continue with its current GOE-tolerated low-profile approach, and will not push for registration. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Jaafar briefed us on NDI's current activities in Egypt, saying that the situation is markedly better than it had been at the end of 2006 when programming ground to a virtual standstill while NDI waited to be registered. Jaafar told us that although NDI's registration is still pending, the organization has succeeded over the past year in running low-profile training sessions for local NGOs inside its Cairo office (as opposed to more public venues), which NDI believes are having a positive impact. According to Jaafar, local NGOs are reaching out to NDI on their own initiative after hearing about NDI's work, and are knocking on NDI's (unmarked) door unannounced to request training and information.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Jaafar commented that these local NGOs are apparently not fearful of GOE retaliation for reaching out to NDI. She noted that NDI provides training in technical assistance (including approaching donors) and capacity building through its sessions and publications. Jaafar remarked that she is observing "sincere, genuine" interest from NGOs outside Cairo that are working to make micro-loans to women to start small businesses, and to help women with voter registration. Jaafar said that NDI is currently working with Egyptian NGOs in seven different governorates from Upper to Lower Egypt to monitor local councils with the aim of strengthening the relationship between local government and citizens. (Note: NDI has made it clear to us that it will not make direct grants to any institutions in Egypt, but will continue to provide training and information. End note)

[1](#)4. (SBU) Jaafar opined that one key to NDI's current success

has been her decision to keep State Security Investigative Services (SSIS) apprised in advance of NDI programming and to share publications with SSIS. Jaafar noted, for example, that before the April 2008 local elections, which a local organization monitored nationwide with USG funding, she distributed the monitoring handbooks to SSIS. She described NDI's Arabic-language publications as "a big hit," and noted that SSIS has not raised any issues with the texts. She also told us that NDI continues to reach out to senior NDP officials who have been supportive (ref C), and that NDI is also offering political training to other parties such as the Wafd and the United Front.

15. (C) Jaafar briefed us on her September 9 meeting with the MFA NGOs department where the MFA recommended NDI wait until it is registered before beginning work. However, Jaafar said, the MFA told her it will not try to dictate NDI's activities, and that it is aware NDI has been notifying SSIS of its activities in advance. According to Jaafar, the MFA also requested advance notice of NDI's activities in the interest of "transparency." Jaafar told us NDI has decided it will continue with its current low-profile approach which the GOE is tolerating, and NDI will not press the MFA on the registration issue. She said that NDI intends to keep its Cairo office relatively small to satisfy GOE concerns, although "ideally" NDI would like to expand its presence throughout Egypt. In a separate meeting September 17, NDI Regional Director Les Campbell told us that NDI plans to add at least one additional expatriate staff member to its Cairo office.

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